

Two Poets of the Peasantry

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Porfirie and Plato,
Aristotle, Ovidius • and ellevene hundred,
Tullius, Tholomeus • ich can nat telle (count) here
(their) names.

Aristotle indeed with his insistence on
leisured competence,
ence, not poverty, as a necessity of the good
life might
have been rather taken aback, like Ovid, to
find himself
here; and we need not ask Cicero's opinion
of a Latinist
who can elsewhere translate 'tabescebam' as
'I said nothing',
as if it were 'tacescebam', and 'non
mechaberis' as 'Thou
shah not kill', as if it were 'non necabis'.
This incompetence
petence too is typical; life likewise was more
than this
troubled heart could construe. In his own
words, of
theology:

The more I muse there-inne • the mistier it
semeth,
And the depper I devyne • the derker me it
thinketh.

Outside sources add little to our
knowledge of him.
Manuscripts entitle the first part of his
poem *Visio*
WiUelmi. Notes in two of them add the
surname by
which the world has come to know him
—'Langland*.

One of these notes adds that he was born at
Cleobury

Mortimer, 'within viii myles of Malborne
hyles'; another

states that he was the son (presumably
illegitimate) of a
gentleman (*generosus*) called Stacy de
Rokayle. The de

Rokayles are known to have been
dependents of the
Dispensers, who had a castle at Hanley
between Malvern

and the Severn. And recently the enterprise
of Mr. A. H.
Bright has unearthed a field known as

'Langland(s)' near
Ledbury; which *is* 'within viii myles' of
Malvern, whereas
Cleobury is twenty-three. In its
neighbourhood are to be
found all requirements for Langland's vision
—a brook;
the Herefordshire Beacon of the Malvern
Hills, with,
once, a castle on its top; a dale beneath,
with another
castle; and even a local tradition that this
was the place
of the poet's dream.